

**International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Michigan State Conference  
Testimony on Senate Bill 358**

The Michigan State Conference of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers represents approximately 15,000 electricians in Michigan, including inside wiremen and outside line workers. We have great concern regarding the proposed changes to the Electrical Administrative Act contained in Senate Bill 358. Senate Bill 358 would exempt electrical work done in manufacturing and mining settings from the licensing requirements contained in state law. This is a very dangerous policy change that would place thousands of Michigan workers at risk.

Working on electrical equipment and infrastructure is an inherently dangerous occupation. Exposure to very high voltage is common in industrial and mining settings. Accidents and mistakes made while working on electrical equipment can cause catastrophic injury and death.

Moreover, work on electrical wiring and circuitry is not something that should be done by untrained individuals. A good deal of electrical work in manufacturing settings involves much more than simply plugging a cord into a socket. Electricians work on live bus panels and hot feeds and require specialized training in order to perform their tasks in a safe manner.

Proponents of the legislation point out that the bill contains a requirement that a master electrician must pull permits for electrical work and inspect the final product. However, the bulk of electrical work that takes place in manufacturing settings does not require a permit. Moreover, nowhere in the bill is there any requirement that the actual work be supervised by anyone with training in electrical work. Passage of this bill would allow a manufacturing or mining employer to assign untrained individuals to carry out the instructions of a master electrician who is not even present while the work is being done. This is a recipe for workplace injury and death.

In fact, risk of electricity-related injury on the job is so high, the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs created an initiative to help stop workplace electrocutions only two years ago. Called the "Preventing Electrocutions Initiative," MIOSHA distributed information to employers on ways to lower the risk of injuries related to electrical equipment. MIOSHA cited statistics showing that there were 360 electrocution deaths nationwide in 2008-2009. This does not include deaths related to "arc flashes" (an event that occurs when improper procedures cause electrical equipment to explode), because such injuries are classified as burns rather than electrocutions.

One of the reasons for the high number of electrical-related injuries comes from employers failing to follow safety guidelines. Of the top ten most cited violations listed by MIOSHA in their most recent newsletter, two of the top five dealt with electricity in industrial settings: control of hazardous energy (lockout/tagout); and electrical systems design. It is hard enough to maintain a safe work environment around high voltage electrical equipment when licensed electricians are doing the work. Having unlicensed and unsupervised workers perform electrical maintenance, installation, and even construction (as SB 358 allows) will undoubtedly result in a higher number of accidents, injuries, and deaths.

Senate Bill 358 attempts to solve a regulatory inconvenience for Michigan manufacturers by putting Michigan workers directly in harm's way. Please vote no on Senate Bill 358.